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Some of the Best Illinois High School Prose of 1949

Selected by J. N. HOOK AND ELLEN CARMICHAEL
University of Illinois

FOREWORD

THE prose in this issue of the *Bulletin* is representative of the best of some 80,000 words submitted for consideration. Other selections, equally good, had to be omitted because of lack of space. No doubt many more, written in classrooms around the state, would have merited inclusion had they been submitted. The editor hopes that still more teachers will send him prose written by their students during 1950. All contributions should be addressed to *Illinois English Bulletin*, 121 Lincoln Hall, Urbana, Illinois. Each manuscript should bear the name of the author, his graduating class numeral, the name of his high school, and the name of his English teacher. No manuscripts will be returned unless they are accompanied by return postage. Deadline for both poetry and prose is December 20, 1950.

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Poor Little Month

Take a look at any calendar you happen to have around, and you will see one thing that just doesn't seem to fit into the picture. You will see eleven months with thirty or thirty-one days each, and you will see February. Poor stepchild of a month! Wouldn't you think that it would get an inferiority complex?

But somehow, even though it was shortchanged in the matter of days, February seems to be held in great esteem. Everybody who can has a birthday or anniversary of some sort in February. Conditions are so crowded that the groundhog has to share February second with two violinists, Fritz Kreisler and Jascha Heifetz. He isn't too badly off, though. He managed to get a day a week earlier than the U. S. Weather Service, which was established on February ninth, 1870. This is only right, because the groundhog was going strong long before the weather bureau.

Some dreadful situations could result from the crowding of the month of February. Washington hasn't been crowded out from his birthday by the two writers who share it, James Russell Lowell and Edna St. Vincent Millay, but, as they outnumber him, I don't know how secure he is. He could get help from Abraham Lincoln, his fellow president, but, if he did, the writers might be reinforced by Dickens from the seventh and Longfellow from the twenty-seventh, which would leave the presidents surrounded!

Perhaps the best way to bring about peace is to have the Boy Scouts of America (incorporated February 8, 1910) keep out all newcomers as a good deed for the day, all twenty-eight or twenty-nine days. That might give the good will of Valentine's Day a chance to influence all the other days and give us a quiet, contented February.

NANCY SINGER, '49

Visitation H. S., Chicago

Dear Diary

January 1

Dear, darling diary. I was never so surprised in all my life as when Aunt Mabel came up with you as a Christmas gift. It is really the first enjoyable gift I've gotten from her. You'll have to get used to my sentimentalities, as you're going to find a lot of sorrow and despair in your pages in the coming year.

January 2

Last day of vacation and I sure took advantage of it. I slept

'til noon. Mom has been raving about some marvelous singer so last evening, instead of going tobogganing, I went to church to hear her. But as far as I'm concerned I would rather have gone tobogganing.

January 3

I started back to school today and had a stiff math test for which I didn't study. I think I did fairly well on it. Guess what, diary! Mom said I may have a new formal for the "hop." That is, if I get a date.

January 4

I met the darlinest boy today. His name is Bruce. I think it's "love at first sight." I can't seem to put him out of my mind. I made a cake tonight, but it tastes like rubber.

January 5

Today Bruce came up to me and talked all during study hall. I get the funniest feeling when I think of him. We talked about everything. He's just new in school, but he's planning on going out for basketball. I'll bet he'll be the star. He has *such* a wonderful build. He asks me the most unimportant questions. I'm sure it's just because he wants to talk to me. I think I'll wear my new sweater. It's the color of downy clouds and twice as soft. We had some singers in assembly today. They were pretty good. Better than Mom's discoveries.

January 6

I tried so much not to flirt or show how much I like "him" but it was so hard. This is something that was meant to be. Another Romeo and Juliet, Samson and Delilah, or some such. I got a new record tonight—"You Were Only Fooling." It just about broke me, but it has such a sentimental value attached to it. You see, as that song was playing down in the cafeteria today, Bruce's and my eyes met. It was something I'll never forget. The telephone just rang—could it be? No, it's Aunt Mabel for Mom. I don't know what to wear tomorrow!

January 7

Here it's Friday and only two weeks 'til the prom. I'm still sitting home dateless, but it gives me a good chance to think and wash and set my hair. Today Bruce came up to me and started talking about the prom. He also asked me if I go steady. My heart just pounded as I said "No!" Then he returned my nega-

tive statement with a brilliant "Oh!" Sometimes I wonder . . . !

January 8

Aunt Mabel and the twins were here today for dinner. Oh, what pests!

January 9

Today Bruce hardly spoke to me, and I heard he took Marianne out. She's an old cat and snob. What a thing to do to your best friend! Just think, taking *my* boyfriend away. I'm off men. I hope I never see another one as long as I live. I reached a big turning point in my life today. Now I know I was destined for things far greater. I'm going to devote myself to bettering humanity. Maybe I'll be a second Mr. Anthony. I've seen a lot of life in my sixteen years. I don't know. I'll decide tomorrow. I'm awfully tired tonight.

January 10

The darlinest boy was flirting with me today. His name is Jim. He has the cutest black, curly hair. This is really different. A great change has come in my life. . . .

JUSTINE JOHNSON, '51
East High School, Rockford
Adele Johnson, teacher

By the Cut of the Clothes

Winter was heading toward spring, and the basketball fever had hit the Middle West. Most states were holding elimination tournaments to decide the top team in the state, and ours was no exception.

Stan Barker's my name. I was second-string guard on Madison High's great team when I was a senior. At the time of the state tourney, we'd gone through twenty-five games undefeated and were favored to go all the way to become the champs. We had class and skill to boot. Ours was a magnificent team.

My story opens on the night of our first game in the tournament. We were in the locker room of our school putting on our classy green and gold uniforms when the coach walked in.

"Hey, coach!" I yelled through the general din. "Who we gonna play tonight?" A wide grin crossed his youthful tan face.

"Don't worry, Stan," he replied. "We're playing a team from a school with an enrollment of sixty-five. You'll get in plenty tonight."

"Sixty-five!" we shouted in unison. Then everybody started howling with laughter. That was a good one. They had a lot of nerve sending us the worst possible in our opening game.

We finished dressing and went up the ramp and out on the playing court. The gym was packed to overflowing, and the cheerleaders were warming up the crowd with a few cheers. With a blissful expression on my face, I picked up a ball and drove into the basket laying up my shot nicely.

We flashed through our warm-ups of shooting, dribbling, passing, and general ball-handling. We had the best shooting percentage in the state, and nobody could hold a candle to our ball handling, so we thought.

Game time arrived, and the team from the hick country town had as yet failed to show up. In spite of our confidence, we always felt a little anxious and expectant at the outset of a game. This was no exception. The crowd started stamping their feet and whistling, and our first team was practicing long shots. Finally seven fellows in dirty blue-jeans strolled up to our coach and asked where they could dress. We all nearly fell over.

They looked worse than our wildest dreams had imagined them. They looked like a bunch of ignorant farm lads who had never seen a basketball before. Our first team sat down. They felt that they didn't need any practice against a team like that.

Fifteen minutes later the opposing team came out on the court. They had dirty gray sweatshirts on. Washed-out blue trunks showed under the sweatshirts. Tired gray sweatsocks curled limply around their shoddy tennis shoes.

It was already so late that no time was allotted to them for warm-up. The game began immediately. All set in the center circle was our lanky center and the equally lanky center from the farm team. The whistle blew, the ball was thrown into the air by the referee, and two tall boys leaped into the air.

The ball was tipped to one of our guards, and he dribbled across the ten-second line. He hesitated momentarily and shot a long pass to our forward in the rear corner.

From out of nowhere a boy in a dirty T-shirt and washed-out trunks intercepted the pass and with perfect form drove in and laid up the ball for two points. Our team looked dazed.

Our guards took the ball down the floor and began to work the roll. Finally a forward hooked the ball into the center who pivoted, shot, and missed. The opposing center neatly rebounded

and heaved a baseball pass to a racing teammate. Before we could blink our eyes, our opponents had another pair of points.

Our team had become careless, of course. The coach took a time out and gave them a brief pep talk. Then they resumed play. They settled down and played good basketball, but the country boys were always a little better. By the half the scoreboard read—

Madison 23

Cornwall Corners 35

It was all over. We never had a chance. The game turned into a rout. I never even got in. We lost by thirty points and were a sorry looking crew when we trudged into the locker-room that night following the first loss of the season. The coach had little to say. Nobody did much talking.

We certainly learned that even though a team is good, there is usually another just a little better. One can't tell a man, or a team, by the cut of the clothes.

ED CORNELL, '51

Maine Township High School

Paulene M. Yates, teacher

Football Preliminaries

As I approach the door, I notice the dirty, sweaty smell of the locker room. After they are dressed for the coming battle, the fellows all lie about on the floor, getting as much rest as they can. They watch the coaches pace nervously up and down the floor. Then Coach P—— calls out, "Okay, you guys! Let's get ready!"

A lump forms in my throat, and I know I couldn't talk even if I wanted to. Then one of the "bench warmers" laughs, and the rest of the fellows give him a disgusted look. Some of the team need to have their ankles taped and bruises padded. Then they are ready for last minute instructions. The fellows are all a bundle of nerves and can hardly sit still while the coach talks to them. Then he gives the starting lineup, and as he points to me, my whole body feels like a lump of lead. I can feel the butterflies flitting about in my stomach, and my legs feel weak and rubbery. All eyes sparkle with excitement, and all chins jut out in determination. After he tells us what to look for in the game, he looks at his watch and barks, "Let's give 'em all we've got."

Then the captain leads us out on the field.

IVAN LAWSON, '50

DeKalb Twp. H. S.

Dull (?) As the Dictionary

With almost twenty thousand of them to remember, I certainly can't be blamed for mixing up one or two once in a while, can I? I'm sure that if my vocabulary were composed of two or three hundred words, I'd not make the slightest error. Never, never would I have said, "Oh, Jane, don't be obese!" when I meant "obtuse"; I should not now be blushing to recall that once I told our pastor that a guest speaker certainly had a "belligerent" voice, when actually I thought it was benevolent.

I used to wonder about possible connections between words that sounded alike. Did people call a sale of odd, useless things a bazaar because all the things sold there were so bizarre? If so, would it follow that a magnate was one who made magnets? This seemed logical for I had heard news commentators mention steel magnates quite frequently. I abandoned my theory, however, when I learned that pears grew one on a stem and not in pairs.

It is sometimes difficult to change words from negative to positive form. Why is not a well-mannered person "couth" if one with poor manners is uncouth? Why doesn't a capable person do things "eptly," if a clumsy person does them ineptly? Changing from positive to negative presents some weighty problems, too. I'm sure, for instance, that something which is not sincere is called insincere, but illogically, the word meaning not flammable is certainly not "inflammable." Likewise immoderate means "without moderation," but impassioned is not synonymous with "without passion."

Please, oh please, will someone solve my utter dilemma about chickens? Why on earth is undressing them called "dressing"?

RAE BERG, '49

East High School, Rockford

H. Koch, teacher

The Plight of the Pitiful Pencils

Attention has been brought to the editors of our local weekly—when one was finally shocked out of hibernation by the magic word "copy"—about the sad plight of the foreshortened pencils. This disgraceful condition that has existed unabated throughout the history of the "backbone of the school system," sometimes known as a lead pencil, has flourished so long that one now approaches the avaricious mouth of that mechanical fiend and foe of all pencils, the pencil sharpener, with somewhat the same feeling with which one enters a dentist's office.

These sharpeners are not particular as to the type of pencil digested, nor can one say they are unfair. They will give you as much sawdust intermingled with pulverized lead from a lowly three-for-a-nickel stick as they will from the socially elite class of writers, the glossy enameled fifteen-center (the one that has an eraser that erases rather than smudges).

No, these sharpeners are not proud. Nor is there much difference between the jazzed-up automatic version complete with finger wipers, and the lowly chewing-gum and rubber-band constructed ones that have more than done their duty to their creed, but still gamely hang on until they rust away into obscurity in the deserted confines of an old office building. They all will do almost anything asked of them, cheerfully, uncomplainingly, requesting only a bit of oil now and then. Anything, that is, but sharpen pencils!

I have been unable to find out why this is so, although I recently spent several seconds in intense concentration over one. Perhaps it is a code of ethics among their union, or possibly nothing more than an unsatisfiable appetite. Whatever the reason, they will give any termite a good race for his money, and still have room to dine on half a gross.

NED JENISON, '50
Paris High School
Addie Hochstrasser, teacher

My Book Friends

Some of my best friends have lived between the book-ends on my desk or on the shelves of the school library. Each waits patiently for me to open the cover, and then out bounces perhaps one of my favorite dogs, such as Silver Chief, ready to take me on an exciting adventure. Perhaps it is a special horse in *My Friend Flicka*, or *The Black Stallion*, galloping across the pages, inviting me to follow. At another time I may be far away on Treasure Island, spending the night with Robinson Crusoe, or white-washing a fence with Tom Sawyer. Book friends are good friends.

RANDY LUNDEEN, '52
Bloomington High School
Lorraine Kraft, teacher

On the Quizzical Side

One of the most exciting and informative pastimes practiced throughout America today is taking quizzes. Most magazines of any consequence frequently offer these quaint items. These quizzes cover a wide variety of subjects and usually enable you to find out more about yourself.

A particularly enlightening quiz enables you to discover what flower you most resemble. Perhaps it is a rose, a violet, nasturtium, or a petunia. Imagine the value of such information! Another quiz tells what kind of perfume to use. Still another satisfies your curiosity as to what heroine in a current novel or film you most resemble.

Some quizzes are a bit more serious. They tell you whether you are an introvert or an extrovert and what type of personality you have. In my own case, often I am not able to answer many of the questions; so when I total up my points and compare them with the analysis, I find I don't seem to have any personality at all; and maybe I don't even exist.

Recently a friend and I took the same personality quiz, and we found ourselves in the same personality group even though she is as aggressive as I am retiring. Something must have been wrong.

In conclusion I want to say that if you have never participated in this project, I urge you to do so as soon as possible. Now, if you will excuse me, I want to find out if my political views are radical or conservative and whether I have a narrow or broadminded attitude toward sex.

DIANE SVEC, '50

J. Sterling Morton H. S., Cicero
Grace Elliott, teacher

Character and Personality

Character is no longer fashionable. Perhaps it is because the commercial world has so infiltrated our lives that we are ashamed to murmur "What a sterling character," but feel obliged to rave "A darling personality." The screen, radio, and advertising all emphasize the surface qualities which one first observes, ignoring the basic traits that will undoubtedly appear through a longer association. Lack of interest in character might well be traced to MGM, NBC, and AAA.

CHARLOTTE DIETZ, '49

Jacksonville H. S.
Emma Mae Leonhard, teacher

Stuff and Nonsense

When I was about five or six, I had an argument with my best friend, and it almost broke up a beautiful friendship. Her coloring book said that *A B C* stood for *apple, banana, and carrot*, while mine declared it stood for *ape, bear, and cat*. Nowadays, every self-respecting six year old knows that *A* stand for *always milder*, *B*, *better tasting*, *C*, *cooler smoking*, *a better cigarette*, *always buy Chesterfields*.

The manufacturers of Chesterfields and Old Golds were about the only ones who did not build up and hint at the curative powers of their cigarettes. After other manufacturers spent millions doing this, Old Golds came out with, "We're tobacco men, not medicine men. The only thing Old Gold cures is the world's best tobacco. If you want a treat instead of a treatment, smoke Old Golds."

It reminds me of the story about the two rival milk companies who had billboards across from each other. One morning the larger dairy had a picture of an acrobatic team in action and above them the words, "These Daredevils Drink Our Milk." Later that day, the smaller company's billboard read, "You Don't Have To Be A Daredevil To Drink Our Milk."

And speaking of daredevils, the poor kid upstairs is confused; he doesn't know whether to eat Wheaties, Cheerioats, or Pep. He's torn between his loyalty to Jack Armstrong, the Lone Ranger, and Superman. The poor kid is a wreck; he flunked two subjects last semester. His sister, however, is smarter and cooler. She guessed four times in a row which side the Toni Twin was on. She has confidence. She's lovely, she's engaged; she makes me wonder how my grandmother ever got my grandfather. There was no Lady Esther, no Ponds, no Revlon, and no Patricia Stevens to tell her how to use them.

But then, that isn't the only thing in this world that confuses me.

MARY BROWN, '49

Visitation H. S., Chicago

Food for Prejudice

First we need a bowl, a really huge bowl, for this recipe seems to demand quite a mixture. Then our ingredients. For a base we use about two cups of ignorance—not the ignorance typified by idiot or imbecile—but real, uninformed ignorance. We drop our

two cups of ignorance into the bowl—no sifting necessary (in fact, it is better without)—and beat it vigorously until it is all mixed up. Then allowing no time for the ignorance to absorb any outside substance such as progressive education, we quickly add about one and one half cups of fear, that dark, sticky liquid which has a very strong and overwhelming effect when used. If we unfortunately have none of this fear on hand, it is very easily obtainable and costs practically nothing, for, in accordance with our American policy of abundance, we have an extraordinary supply of fear—fear of insecurity, fear of the atomic age, fear of starvation in a world of plenty. Having carefully measured our one and a half cups of fear, we pour it slowly over the mixed-up ignorance until it completely covers it.

The next step requires tremendous skill. First we obtain four fresh packages of propaganda—you know, those little hard-shelled packages that usually come wrapped in newspapers and magazines. Here the difficulty lies in separating the propaganda, dropping the useful untruth into the batter and storing the truth away where it cannot become bothersome.

Our next ingredient is indifference—that selfish indifference toward human, racial, and economic problems. This indifference comes in a capsule which, when planted in this threefold mixture, breaks and spreads out, disguising its true nature. Ingredient number five is an absolute essential. Without it our dough could not be shaped to form definite designs or ideas. So in go two tablespoons of narrow-mindedness—that impediment to world understanding—and we're ready for baking.

Oh! We almost forgot the flavoring. For this we use a pinch of temper, good old seasoned, spicy temper that serves a dual purpose by causing our finished dough to rise and let off excess steam. Now we are ready to mold the dough into various shapes. Maybe one of these figures is a Negro, fierce and cunning, with a knife in hand, or a coal miner on strike, or a Jewish Wall Street broker sitting in piles of greenbacks. Just before shoving these delicacies into the oven of mental confusion, we coat them with a thick frosting of false pride and self-righteousness. Then, into our minds they go, to sit and smolder for days until they finally emerge as our thoughts, our opinions, and, more specifically, our prejudices.

ALICE PASEL, '49

Jacksonville High School

Emma Mae Leonhard, teacher

A Book Report

Abraham Lincoln, The Prairie Years, by Carl Sandburg

"The folk lore Lincoln, the maker of stories, the stalking and elusive Lincoln. . . ."

With these words as a preface, Carl Sandburg documents in *The Prairie Years* with "all gifts of imagination, intuition, experience, prayer, silence, sacrifice, and the laughter next door to tears" not only the life but the very mind—better still, the soul—of one of the all-time great citizens of the world: lanky, homely, honest Abraham Lincoln.

Telescoping carefully and in poetic language thirty years' concentrated research into 480 pages, the author, already regarded as a great American son of the prairies himself, manages to do more than inform and entertain: he creates.

Beginning in the gray, misty past of a one-room cabin in Kentucky, Sandburg creates an ignorant, half-wild boy—a "shirt-tail" boy, a boy who had a funny feeling about killing "things," a boy who pondered on the meanings of heavy, dark words in the family Bible. He was a boy who used to be told, "Abe, your face is as solemn as a papoose."

Sandburg takes the reader by the hand and brings him to the country west of the Ohio and the Alleghenies. A challenging land: "The cowards never started for here and the weak ones died on the way." This was the country which little Abe and his wide-eyed thoughts and questions called his new home.

Abe grew, and although his father sometimes grumbled about "wasting time," Mother never forgot to comb his coarse black hair and say, "Abe, you go to school now, and larn all you kin." Kissing her, he would say, "Yes, Mammy," and start on the nine-mile walk through timberland where bear, deer, coon, and wildcats ran wild.

Abe's body developed amazingly fast, but his thoughts developed even faster. He wanted to learn, to know, to live, to reach out; he wanted to satisfy hungers and thirsts which he couldn't explain. He heard words that bothered him. On the coins he received for ferrying passengers on the wild Ohio, he often read the word "Liberty." Liberty—just what did *that* mean? Words fascinated him. What were murder and manslaughter; burglary, robbery, and larceny; fraud, unlawful assembly, rout, and riot? He was always asking. What did they mean by "malice," "mercy,"

"charity"? People noticed the boy. "There's suthin' peculiarsome about Abe" was becoming a common statement.

In this intimate, knowing manner, Sandburg blazes the trail that marks Lincoln's life. He presents us with the young lawyer—shy, awkward, but wise far above his age. We see a man of doubts and fears who is led on by an inner something that whispers, "Keep going, Abe." We are shown the teller of tales who "could make a cat laugh." Beside us ambles the congressman in his stove-pipe hat, his long, sharp face troubled by important issues: slavery, abolition, secession. Sandburg leads us to the man who had served in Congress but is now quietly practicing law in Springfield. At forty, he has the rest of his life planned. "There's nothing going on in politics that I care about. I am trying to become a lawyer."

Yet some people couldn't forget the coarse, prairie figure. In corners of the country, men were telling each other what Abe Lincoln was and wasn't. They noticed he was not "fading away." Those questions he used to ask kept coming up again. "If A can enslave B, why cannot B enslave A?" Other thoughts began filling his mind. There were instances when he could not restrain himself from exploding. "President Polk is a bewildered, confounded, and miserably perplexed man," he once suddenly shouted. After an outburst like this, he would hesitate and wonder if he had made a fool of himself. Even before he could decide this question, he was involuntarily off again. "Yes, Stephen Douglas makes sense, but let me point out that . . ."

And at this stage, where we find the half-wild Kentucky boy a grown-up thinker who broods over the puzzles to which he is being drawn, the author dims and turns out the spotlight. He has shown us the prairie years. The later period is yet to follow.

Carl Sandburg creates—or rather, recreates—"this seer and sayer. He solved, resolved, and answered terrible questions; or he said with honesty and a desperate toss of his head, that he had no answer, no man could form the answer." The author shows us what Lincoln was to his time: "a lawyer, politician, a good neighbor and story-teller, a live, companionable man; these belonged to his role."

And the future? What was to follow? "He was to be a mind, a spirit, a tongue, and a voice."

JAMES MALOF, '49

Evanston Twp. H. S.

Clarence W. Hach, teacher

The Old Soak

Tessie was a pretty thing in her filmy white gown. It seemed to encase her in loveliness from her head to her feet, and the chic white thread that was attached to the small red and yellow printed placard was just the latest fashion. Of course, you could tell she was the most delicate model out of Lipton's.

Everyone had to admit that Tessie was the best any of them had ever seen or could ever hope to see coming from any house of distinction. Of course some of the others were naturally jealous, but it was understandable in this case.

As Tessie was lying there in all her glory, a great force moved her and swept poor Tessie away. At first she thought it was a tornado, a hurricane, or a typhoon, but soon she realized she was being carried by some huge unknown power.

She suddenly looked down and saw a huge pot of boiling, bubbling liquid directly below her. In a wink her whole life flashed before her—all her mean remarks to her less fortunate friends and her friend's warnings of this horrible fate, all the others' admiration for her, her beautiful enviable self—everything! She knew her doom was soon approaching.

Quickly she was plunged downward into that steaming, bubbling pot nevermore to live the life of a Bag-u-tant, for when she emerged, she was limp and wet. She managed somehow to get back to the others, but she was not the same lovely Tessie. She was so wrinkled and shrunken that none of the other little teabags recognized her—no more the tender plump Tessie from Lipton's—just another soggy old bag.

MARILYN ZOHM, '49
Niles Township H. S.
Priscilla Baker, teacher

Atomic Peace: The Student's Role

"No stockpile can ever be large enough to protect us. There is no military defense. . . . Now that we know how the Russians have felt for four years, the source of our own safety becomes apparent. At last there is no alternative. *We must turn and live with one another.*"

With these prophetic sentences, Dr. John B. Thompson, dean of the chapel of the University of Chicago, has pointed out to all peoples their one salvation from the certain obliteration of an atomic war.

The repeatedly demonstrated deadlines of armaments races and

the absence of a physical defense against the atomic bomb, now possessed by the two most powerful and potentially warlike nations of today's world, leave us only one road to peace.

This last, best hope for atomic peace lies in the creation by the common people in all nations of Tennyson's "Parliament of Man"—the realization of the universal brotherhood of humankind through a functioning world government.

What will be our contributions, as high school students, toward bringing the dream of world government to life?

First we will practice democracy in our homes, our school, and our community to prepare ourselves for our duties as citizens of a united, democratic world.

We will keep informed on current affairs, and particularly on trends toward world government, in order to judge their merits intelligently and act constructively for them.

Lastly, most vital and satisfying of all, we will learn not tolerance, but love and respect for the traditions, contributions, and individuals we meet of all racial and national groups, so that soon we may "turn and live with one another" for the mere joy of human love.

JOHN PURNELL, '50
Evanston Twp. H. S.
Clarence W. Hach, teacher

The Homestead

In my family, the domestic animals always seem to outnumber the human element which, until six months ago, consisted of only three: Mom, Dad and me. Now there is my little sister, Lorna, a happy baby who brings pleasure to us all. The trouble is that we are all entirely too fond of animals and tend to make pets of anything that comes within grabbing distance. There have been the usual cats, dogs, and goldfish, even pigeons and baby lambs, that were not too difficult to house when we lived in town. Now that we live on a farm, we find our scope widening from day to day. All this last winter after the family had been fed in the evening, my mother would line up five bowls on the kitchen counter and fill them with supper for the three dogs and two cats. At the end of the line stood the bottle, complete with nipple, that held the formula for the orphan pig Mom was raising. How we laughed at her. Well, she raised that pig, and now if anyone gets that "market" gleam in his eye, she flies to Porky's rescue!

The cats are supposed to be strictly the barnyard variety with

the job of keeping the mice situation in hand and, as such, are not fed at the house. Sooner or later one of them shows up at the back door with a sore foot or some such flimsy complaint, knowing my mother is good for a soft touch. The other cat, sensing the situation, comes along for the ride, and two cat bowls are added to the line-up on the counter.

Not long ago we were fortunate to have caught five fox pups. Foxes cost the farmers many hundreds of dollars each year through chicken stealing and other destruction. It should have been, if not a pleasure, at least a satisfaction for my father to have disposed of them by some humane method. We discussed the various ways this could be done, and the result was that he lugged them in a cage all the way into Chicago, then spent half the morning calling different zoos and the Humane Society but couldn't get a taker. He finally palmed them off on various of his friends after extolling their virtues as Interesting Animals to Raise.

Perhaps after reading the foregoing paragraphs you have decided that my family is a poor risk for the rigors of farm life. Maybe you're right, but I can't take time now to argue the point—I have to lend Dad a hand; he's out in the barn playing mid-wife to one of the sows. Put on the hot water, Mom, and bring down some clean cloths! Hurry . . .

HASKELL LOVE, '51

Naperville High School

Dorothy Scroggie, teacher

The Moment—An Autumn Reverie

On the well-worn stairs the thud-thud of our youthful feet marks the passing of another day of lectures and lessons. Ahead of us the door is shoved open, and we are swept out with elbows in our ribs and laughter in our voices.

As we hurry down the front walk, the wind greets us mischievously by blowing Margie's papers across the lawn and laughing at our feeble efforts to tie our scarves securely. We dash madly across the road, completely ignoring the blast of horns and shouts of "Look Out!" The leaves scurry and riot among our feet as we cross the park. Our dispositions walk hand in hand with the weather; our spirits soar upward to unfamiliar heights; our dreams and desires again regain life. Shouts and laughter—earthly intruders—pierce the cooling calm of the autumn afternoon. Birds, once settled in their nests, now twitter about, imitating the rush and

commotion. The moment is bubbling over with vividness and vivacity.

And yet it has a moody background. The trees bend sorrowfully toward us, longing for our freedom. The old rusty swings, which once moved to the rhythm of our laughter, creak and moan at our neglect. The town house, ugly and forlorn, opens its eyes and gazes in despair upon our generation. As we brush against the shrubbery that borders the walk, we do not heed its humble apologies for its shameful half-dressed appearance. We mock the ugly, old-fashioned surroundings—the background of our lives.

We are young and the moment is pleasant—we are not interested in anything but the present. What we would do without these familiar surroundings does not bother us. Our minds are filled with the anxiety of getting to the drugstore; our spirits remain undaunted despite the red horizontal rays of the sun as we turn at the bank corner. Cars buzz by on the highway; the factory workers swarm across the streets and into the stores; grade kids zip by on roller skates; but we still keep up our lively conversation. Someone opens the door, and we push our way into Walgreen's.

PAT EUBANK, '49

Cumberland Unit H. S., Greenup
Gladys Wibking, teacher

Emerson's Doctrine

I'm gullible.

When Mr. Leader took me by the hand and led me through Emerson's essay, "Gifts," I emerged victorious with this idea: a true gift is a part of yourself—no, Junior, not an arm or a leg wrapped in red ribbon—but a reflection of your occupation . . . occupation, now whom could I give York High to? Going on, Emerson expounded, a poet gives a poem; a painter, a picture; a girl, a handkerchief of her own making.

So I sewed. Finding the material wasn't hard. Threading the needle was just a wee bit more difficult, but when it came to cutting the material, I was gone—but gone.

I planned to cut out five linen handkerchiefs. I cut out five linen handkerchiefs and one square of Irish lace. . . . I'd forgotten to remove the table cloth.

The way to a male's heart is through the stomach—a very tedious journey. Christmas cookies I would bake. The kitchen and I started out on friendly terms. Six burned fingers, seven

scorched pans, five packages of Ready-Mix, and a small explosion later, we were equally devastated.

The stove was repaired in less than two days and after that we started having meals again. The bottomless food pit that is my brother sneers at me when we pass.

As I was a kind of negative personality to begin with, my stream of ideas was rapidly becoming a mere trickle. Deciding it was the thought that counted in giving, I gathered paints, paper, brushes, and a rhyming dictionary and prepared to make my own Christmas cards.

Did you know that if done correctly with one fleck of a paint-laden brush, a ceiling, two walls, and three-fourths of a floor can be spattered with a rainbow of colors?

I finished one card, a masterpiece of progressive art. Just then my sister entered the room and screamed. Three horrifying seconds later I realized I was wearing her new blouse—I wonder how she recognized it.

Christmas shopping, ha! I should buy presents for people who won't even let me in the house.

Move over, Rover—This doghouse will have to house two!!

SONJA MONSEN, '50

York Comm. H. S., Elmhurst

Eleanor A. Davis, teacher

The Bridal Veil

It's nearly spring and, as the old saying goes, in spring a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of love. (A young girl's fancy, too, as a matter of fact.) It's spring, and soon 'twill be June. The month of brides in white satin gowns and long shimmering veils. By the way, do you know why a bride wears a veil? You don't? Well, it's quite a story. This is the way it goes:

Long years ago in an ancient oriental kingdom, there lived a rich and wise maharaja. But, like many very rich and wise men, he was very vain. He was a handsome man, and for his wife he had the most beautiful woman in all the kingdom.

To make his happiness complete, his wife presented him with a baby daughter.

For a couple of years the maharaja took great pleasure in watching the child, Lotus, at play. But soon his joy turned to doubt, and then to sorrow. Certainly the daughter of such comely

parents could be nothing but beautiful. But Lotus was not lovely. You might say—indeed you would say—she was very ugly.

His wife tried to console him by saying, "She will soon outgrow this ugly stage. Even the most beautiful of women were apt to have been ugly during childhood." But Lotus did not outgrow that ugliness. If any change was made, it was for the worse.

As said before, the maharaja was very vain. He didn't want his subjects to know that the princess, his daughter, was unlovely. He had her put in a suite of rooms in the palace. It was guarded night and day so that she could not leave and no one, save her parents, could enter.

At first the villagers wondered why the princess was never seen, but they soon forgot about it.

Years passed, and under the maharaja's wise rule, the kingdom prospered. The ruler's treasure houses became full to overflowing. Beyond a doubt, he was the richest man in the Orient. But he was getting old and couldn't live much longer. He had no heir, except his ugly daughter, and unless she married, that was the end of the dynasty.

But what young, intelligent man would marry such an ugly woman? The maharaja pondered and puzzled. At last he came up with an idea. He would announce to his subjects that his daughter was ready to wed, but in order to find a suitable heir to the throne, the young man would first have to pass several tests. Thus they would think the daughter was beautiful and wonderful to be so particular about a mate.

The people who had forgotten he had a daughter were surprised. Many young men's minds followed the line of thought the maharaja had planned. At first they wondered because no one had ever seen Princess Lotus, but her mother was so beautiful and her father so handsome, surely she would be lovely. Besides, marrying her would provide them with wealth and position.

Thus began a long series of contests. At last one man emerged victorious above all other contestants. The "great king" was very pleased with this young rajah. He was handsome and intelligent, although poor.

Great festivities and vast preparations were made for the coming wedding. The maharaja proclaimed it a national holiday.

At last the great day came. People came from miles around to see the Princess Lotus. The crowd waited impatiently for the ceremonies to begin.

At last the trumpets announced the appearance of the royal

wedding party. A murmur of surprise rippled through the crowd. The bride wore a veil over her face! Why? No one knew.

The solemn rites were performed. The bridegroom glanced questioningly at the maharaja, who nodded his head. The groom slowly pulled the veil away from his wife's face.

The crowd drew back in astonishment. The groom stepped back, looking as if he had been struck. The Princess, his wife, was the ugliest looking wretch he had ever laid eyes upon.

Although she never outgrew her ugliness, in the years following she proved herself a wise and sympathetic ruler. Her husband found her personality to be charming, and grew to love her dearly.

All the other ugly young maidens in the land started wearing veils. As it was the custom of the country for the bride's father and the groom to make all wedding arrangements, the groom often did not see his wife-to-be until the ceremonies. Soon the young men became wary and refused to marry a girl wearing a veil.

Several young girls, who were not too pretty, presented their case to Her Majesty. The queen decreed that all brides should wear veils or be punished by law.

After that, marriage for a young man was just a gamble, until one clever young beauty conceived the idea of wearing the veil off her face, which has been the custom ever since.

SUSAN CRANDALL, '52
Winslow High School
Gertrude Arnold, teacher

The Children, the Cut-outs and Me

The children are making Christmas cut-outs in the nursery. I gave them some shiny green and red paper, scissors, paste, a big book to cut from, and just everything of which I could think. I'm "babysitting," which requires a lot of thinking to keep the children busy. I think they are doing nicely—that is more than I expected. Don is making a Christmas tree and is pasting a few colored balls on it. Now, would you look at that! Nancy is setting a table with cut-outs. You know, this might be fun. I think I'll make something like a doll or . . . Oh, no, that would be silly. I'm too big. But maybe just this once . . . Hey! Nancy, hand me those scissors, will ya?

JAN EVANS, '52
Collinsville Twp. S. S.
Lucille Miller, teacher

Yellow Leaves

The wind whipping through the brush struck the house with subdued force, stirring eddies of leaves against the shingled wall. The spider, with his web established over the front of one of the rattling windowpanes, had chosen an excellent place of business. At night the light from within attracted hundreds of gnats and wood-flies, which crept upward on the window surface, basking in the light until they reached the top, when they flew down again to creep unendingly upward. So strategically placed was this snare that few creatures escaped it. This little businessman was a picture of prosperity, for, throughout the net, bundles of gnats were stored for future use, and presently he was industriously gathering in the night's catch. It was likely even at that moment that he was counting his blessings, for he had no overhead and few occupational hazards. A giant moth had not hit his net for three days, and this was the first windstorm in weeks. As he scampered here and there busily disentangling his haul, he was unaware of the approach of disaster. The wind had risen to a higher pitch, and was now building up a large leaf-eddy, which moved along the wall, its yellow leaves dashing against pane and shingle with equal force. The eddy moved swiftly, and in an instant it had struck the web. Yellow leaves, red leaves, red and yellow, yellow leaves flew in all directions, rebounding off the pane to rip the snare apart. When the disaster had passed, the once-prosperous businessman hung weakly to a strand of net, bereft of his gains. Presently a gust of wind tore the web from its roots. As it went flying downwind, more yellow leaves struck the bare, rattling windowpane.

AL WORKMAN, '50

Evanston Twp. H. S.

Mary L. Taft, teacher

The Secret

A strange excitement surged within a seven-year-old heart as Sarah thought of the happy day ahead. Events had followed events and now, clad in a clean, neatly patched dress and a shining spirit, she was ready for the long train ride into town. She was more excited than most children her age would be. Something in Sarah's life was missing. It was an important part. There was something that she did not know, something that the rest of her family knew. Her family had sheltered her like a bird from the tempestuous

winds of life. Now, riding on the train, she thought of all this, wondering what it was that she had missed. What was it? A sickening odor of gas from the train, factory smoke, and five-cent cigars filled her nostrils, but to Sarah it was a mystic aroma; it was civilization.

When the town appeared in sight, an impatient stir was evident among the passengers. The train lurched to an abrupt stop, and carelessly the busy commuters filed from the train. Sarah held her mother's skirt so tightly that her knuckles showed white, but without this fervent grasp she would have been swept off into the crowd.

Walking down the busy street, Sarah felt no strange excitement. Emotions were at a minimum. There was an uncomfortable air of impersonality as she walked along with the hurrying crowd. But like any little girl, she forgot all this when she entered Macy's toyland. There was much to see. She stood with her nose pressed against the show case that held the dolls. Fascinated by the display of dolls for every little girl's desire, she would have remained for hours had it not been for her mother's gentle coaxing.

Ahead in the long aisle was a large marble device, a machine that squirted water when a certain button was pushed. Sarah decided it must be the proper thing to do—to push that button. People were lined up waiting to push the button to get a drink, Sarah discovered. Promptly she took her place in the line. Maybe here she would discover the answer for which she had been looking. Climbing up on the step, she pushed the button and the clear fresh water streamed forth, just as it had for the others. The coolness soothed her parched little throat. Hearing confusion behind her, she was about to turn; but before she could do so, a hand pulled at the neck of her dress. Turning and raising wondering eyes, Sarah met the indignant gaze of a tall, dignified saleslady who smelled like the perfume counter downstairs. What was this all about, Sarah wondered. Why was she pulled away? Why did other people push her away impatiently? Could it have anything to do with the neat sign above the fountain, the sign that read *FOR WHITES ONLY*? Sarah didn't know. Sarah couldn't read. Sarah wanted to go home.

JUSTINE JOHNSON, '51
East High School, Rockford
Adele Johnson, teacher

The Crucifixion

And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said this, he gave up the ghost.

Saint Luke 24: 44-46

"Ha-ha! Look at the King of the Jews. He claims He's the son of God. Well, then, why doesn't this Father of His do something for Him?"

"C'mon, Son of God. Why don't you tell your Father on us? Ask Him to save you! What? Can't you even talk? You're the Son of God! Surely you can talk to us. We may not be as good as you, but we have ears; we will humbly listen. Ha-ha, ha-ha, ha-ha!"

"The blood runs swiftly from your wounds, King. Command your blood to stop flowing, O King, or surely you will die. And—ah, but I forget. You are the Son of God. You're not made to die. There! I spit upon you, but you don't even condemn me for it. The Son of God is a coward on top of everything else. Death is good for you!"

Many mocked Him that day, but He pitied them without anger. And as the jeers of the crowd grew louder, the sky overhead grew darker. Masses of clouds menaced angrily, and a streak of lightning flashed warningly. The heavens were raging, and suddenly a low growl which augmented into a tumultuous roar of thunder vibrated in the ears of the scornful mob below.

The Man whom everyone mocked hung with head bowed upon the cross. Now with the sound of thunder being repeated, He slowly raised His head and looked up at the sky. Abruptly the thundering stopped. The people quieted down fearfully; and with slowly mounting dread, they too gazed upward at the sky. For a moment there was a heavy silence, a silence tingling with fear, expectancy, tenseness, and an overpowering sense of guilt. Watching the sky, the people saw the mass of clouds break apart and then rapidly glide toward each other. A low rumbling began. The sound crescendoed, and the roar seemed to charge the air with its impact. The two masses of clouds were drawing nearer to each other, and the people waited breathlessly. Suddenly a voice cried

out. "Father!" All eyes turned toward the Man nailed to the cross and then back again to the sky. No one spoke.

Lightning zig-zagged across the sky and flashed continually across the terrified faces of the crowd. Again His voice called out. "Father! Thou hast forsaken me!" Once more the eyes of the crowd shifted back toward Him who had done so much for them and who could have done so much more. Suddenly a woman's voice pierced the blanket of silence.

"Look, look! The clouds. Oh, have mercy, have mercy upon us!"

The mob gasped; a sharp clap of thunder blasted the air; lightning illuminated the sky; the clouds merged; and as they became one, Jesus spoke for the last time, His face glowing as He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

And with those words, our Savior died.

MARILYN JOHNSON, '51
Maine Township High School
Paulene M. Yates, teacher

First Trip

A SHORT STORY

Johnny Randolph took one last look at the paper before he threw it away. His eyes roved over the front page of the *Waterbury Chronicle* for December 11, and stopped at the notice—

WEATHER REPORT

for upper and central Iowa.

Cloudy and cool today, with fog in late afternoon.

Clearing tomorrow. High today 40; low tonight 28.

He dropped the paper in the gutter and entered the yards of the Illinois and Western, a midwest trunk line of some 400 miles. Taking stock of all his equipment for the fifth time, Johnny soliloquized, "Watch—yeah—flashlight—yeah—pencil and pad—yeah." (He really didn't know what he was going to use the pencil for, but it looked professional.) Satisfied that all his belongings were in order, he looked at his brand new ticker—a real railroad watch it was, nice and big with a silver finish. That ought to last a long time, Johnny thought.

In spite of all his apparent readiness, Johnny felt a little bit worried about his new job. Even though he was 21 and pretty

well built, this being a brakeman was not the easiest thing in the world. And his age—or, rather, lack of it—made him wonder what the older crew members would think of him. Probably they would be a bunch of decrepit old egotists who couldn't see any good thing in a new man. He took out his watch with an elaborate flourish and peered into the face as if it were a crystal ball and could tell him how he was going to get along this first day.

He seemed a little bit surprised that all the watch did was to say tick tock and that it was 7:19. Well, there would be enough time to get acquainted with the rest of the crew.

He headed towards the caboose, which sat squatly on number three track at the end of the 16-car drag. At last, he felt, he had found a place where he belonged, even if he was a bit nervous about this first trip. Ever since he had been a kid in grammar school he had been irresistibly drawn to the railroad. So, when he was of age, he had applied for a brakeman's job on the Waterbury-Charlesville local run of the I&W. Although the Illinois and Western wasn't as big as some of its competitors, it prided itself on good, fast service on both its freight and varnish runs. Through the years, it had gained a good reputation for safety and service, and Johnny was proud to be a member of its small army of workers.

Peering ahead, Johnny saw the conductor, already in the crummy, working on a sheaf of papers on the desk before him. Today was his big chance. He had to show the other, older members of the train crew that even though he was only 21, he could kick a 70-ton hopper into a siding and then set down on its hand brake as well as the rest of them.

Johnny took a deep breath and swung up the steps to the caboose's rear platform.

"H'lo," he offered to Harry (Mac) McReady, the conductor, "I'm the new brakeman."

McReady was a tall, slightly stooped man of some 50 years—a typical conductor, Johnny decided. McReady answered with an affable grunt, perusing his switch list and making mental notes as to where to drop off which car in his 16-car load.

Johnny gratefully acknowledged McReady's kindness, and immediately tried to look as professional as he could while taking inventory of the flags, lanterns, and the myriad equipment which may be found in a cabin car.

Presently number 702, a trim Mikado, puffed by and settled itself at the front of the chain of cars. McReady glanced at his watch and peered thoughtfully out the door. Then he re-entered the caboose and addressed Johnny.

"You'll ride in here with me and pass signals for the first few days. Unless maybe get an easy move, that's about all you'll do."

At that moment the regular brakeman entered the caboose. Upon seeing Johnny he looked questioningly at Mac.

"New man," explained McReady. "Name's—ah—Randolph?" Johnny nodded in assent, and the conductor continued. "Yeh—Randolph. John Randolph. This here's Al Davis, the reg'lar brakeman. Al, you need a guy to help with signals, don't you?" Davis wagged his head.

"Yep, we'd make better time." Then, to Johnny, "I hope you know your signals, kid."

Johnny came back, "I've always wanted to work on the I&W. I knew the signals when I was 16 by watching trains being made up in the yards."

"That's good," said Al emphatically. "We can use you."

"Well, we have to get goin' if we're to get out of here on time," remarked McReady.

With that, he went out the back platform and gave the hogger the highball. Soon two answering toots came back from the head-end, and with a slight jerk, the assembled drag began to gather speed. McReady re-entered the caboose and proceeded to give Johnny some instructions about the first stop.

"We'll take on water," he began, "and then spot some cars."

Attentively Johnny listened as the big conductor continued his briefing. Finally he stopped and said, "Guess that's about all. Just do what Al says and you'll get along all right."

Johnny looked out the window at the passing scenery. He knew most of it by heart, having lived in Waterbury all his life. He was glad that Mac and Al had proved to be such nice guys. "Most conductors are kind of hard on new men," he thought to himself. "I wonder what the rest of the crew are like?" Soon his question was to be answered. In a short while the engineer steamed up to a smooth halt in front of the Frankford station.

As he clambered out of the caboose, Johnny saw the brakeman on the head end climb up on top of the tender, and, with a mighty heave, pull down the chains which were fastened to the water pipe. The tender seemed to gulp the water much as a prehistoric monster would. Finally the brakie released the chains. With a squeal of protest, the pipe quivered back to its original place.

McReady and Al were already down upon the ground and striding rapidly ahead to the engine. Mac turned around to glance at Johnny as if to say "Hurry up." Johnny quickened his pace and

soon was side by side with Mac. All three walked to the front end to meet the rest of the crew.

"This's our new brakie," announced McReady. "Name's Randolph—Johnny Randolph. Johnny—this's Pete Barton, our engineer, Frank Johnson, the fireman, an' Speed Grant, the brakeman."

The other crew members nodded at the mention of Johnny's name and then went about their own tasks. Johnny stuck to McReady, who was talking to Barton, the engineer, about the moves they had to make. He sized up the rest of the crew. Pete, he finally decided, was about 50; Frank and Speed seemed almost his own age—maybe a little older. After the moves at the first stop had been completed, a clear board greeted them, and Mac came back to the caboose and told Johnny, "Give 'im the highball, kid."

Johnny leaned out the back platform and swung his arm in the time-honored fashion that meant "Go ahead." Up in the cab, Frank caught the signal and acknowledged it. Soon the string of cars moved forward, first jerkily, then smoother as the train picked up speed. After re-entering the crummy, Johnny looked at McReady as if to ask, "How'd I do?" but Mac was silent.

Pete had the drivers churning over the high iron, and shortly number 702 began the steep, 12-mile descent to Charlesville. After waiting in the hole for two time freights and spotting a few cars at hick stops, the load had shrunk to four cars, all intended for the western terminus of the Charlesville section. Here, at Charlesville, were a wye, a water tower, and several section crew shanties containing all the equipment needed to maintain the main line from Waterbury to Charlesville, a total of some 28 miles.

Pete turned the locomotive around and then the crew headed for the local beanery to down some grub. While they were eating, Johnny noticed McReady talking to Peter, the engineer.

"Yep," Mac was saying, "if we keep up like this on the way back, we can get home before number 2." Johnny listened attentively. Number two was one of the I&W's crack passenger trains, the Hawkeye Special, which came through Waterbury at 6 o'clock. Hastily doing some mental calculating, Johnny remarked, "It's 12:40 now," to Frank, the coalheaver. "Does he expect us to get all our moves done and get back to Waterbury before then?"

Frank nodded. "Only got about ten cars to spot."

Even so, thought Johnny, they couldn't dawdle. That long climb up to Frankford would knock them back a little. It would be nice, though, to get in an hour and a half earlier than usual.

Yep, Mac knew what he was doing. There had never been a serious accident on a train on which he had been conductor.

* * * *

It was now ten minutes to five, and number 702 had but one more car to spot before high-tailing it back to Waterbury. They were well on the two per cent grade up to Frankford, which was supposedly one of the longest and steepest hills in the Midwest. Back in the caboose, Al, the head brakeman, told Johnny, "It won't be no trouble to drop off that workcar. You wanta try it?"

"Sure. I'll try and handle it," replied Johnny. He didn't want Al to know how glad he was to do such a simple move.

They had picked up a work car in Charlesville destined for a rather small station, Barlow. The one at Barlow was only there from 8 to 4:30, and had already left. A single grain elevator was about all Barlow had to offer in a commercial way, and one lone siding, connected at both ends, was silently rusting away beside the polished 130-pound high iron.

Number 702 puffed up to the little depot and halted. Johnny swung off the steps and went ahead. The old, wooden boxcar, which had been converted to a camp car, was right next to the engine, in easy position to drop off.

Johnny went about spotting the car as quickly as he could, as it was getting both dark and late. In about five minutes the work car reposed next to the silent little station, and Johnny was striding rapidly back to the caboose. It was just five o'clock when Pete took up the slack on the now short drag and chugged ahead. Back in the crummy, Johnny sat proudly watching as Mac took one last check through his orders.

"Yep, got 'em all," he beamed.

Al took out his pipe and tobacco sack and soon was contentedly emitting a cloud of fragrant blue smoke. Johnny looked out through one of the windows. Just in a short while hazy purple and blue shadows had begun to envelop the countryside. Up ahead Pete whistled for a grade crossing, picking up speed in the meantime. The plaintive blasts floated back to the speeding way car. Johnny looked at his watch. 5:22. They were almost over the big hill with plenty of time to spare. Only about ten more miles to home. . . . Suddenly McReady's forehead clouded. He snapped his fingers once or twice as if trying to remember something. Then he rose from his chair and called out, "Hey, kid, you chocked that work car, didn't you?"

Johnny turned away from the window. He noticed a slight mist settling over the valley.

"Why, no—did you tell me to?"

McReady stared out the back door, watching the ties flowing rapidly out from under the caboose. Every second was taking them farther away from the siding.

"I guess I forgot to tell you," he reckoned. "That car had a bad leak in the air hose—"

Suddenly Johnny realized why McReady was so concerned. That old work car had a bad hose—the air would soon leak out of the brake cylinder. The steep downgrade and that old siding—it was connected at both ends!

Johnny started. He looked about wildly. "If that car rolls down the grade it'll go out onto the main—" he began.

Al came out of his semi-conscious state and broke in with, "No it won't, the switch's closed. But it can get up enough speed to get stuck in the points."

Johnny realized what he had done—or what he hadn't done—his first day on the job. In a short while the Hawkeye Special would come thundering up the grade and no one would be there to signal a stop. The operator had gone. A wave of terror swept over him. "What time is number 2 due through Barlow?" he inquired of Al.

Consulting his employer's timetable, Al replied, "5:45. We got time yet." With that, he rushed out to the back platform. In a short while Johnny felt the air go on under the train. Al raced to the headend. Soon Pete had thrown his lever into reverse, and was beating the stack off the 702. Faster, ever faster. As the short train gathered momentum, Johnny noticed the mist getting thicker. In this valley clouds just seemed to hang in the air about this time of the year. He glanced at his watch—5:32. 13 minutes to go four miles, pull into the siding, and drag that old car off the eastbound main.

In a short while they passed a white object. Johnny stared through the settling mist. It was a milepost. Three miles to go. He didn't want to look at his watch. Suddenly a futile rage welled up inside him. It *wasn't* his fault, he told himself—Mac hadn't *told* him to put a piece of wood under the wheels. . . . No. It wasn't Mac's fault either. It was the siding's. Why was it connected at both ends? Sure. It was the siding's fault. . . .

Pete had the 63-inch drivers whirling as fast as they could go, even though he could hardly see five carlengths ahead of the

caboose without a headlight. Darkness was closing in fast. Another white object rushed by. Two miles. Johnny couldn't help it. He had to look at his watch, 5:36—nine minutes left.

Why couldn't the siding be like the others? No. It had to be connected in two places. Say—maybe that car hadn't rolled at all—

The mist came even closer, grabbing at them from all sides. Through the gloom, Johnny vaguely thought how queer it was to be riding in a caboose and seeing the ties coming at him instead of receding. A pall of silence had settled on them, much as the deepening mist. McReady leaned stolidly against the rear door, his face a mask of calm over a mind of turmoil. Johnny looked down in his pocket. He saw the silver top of his new watch. TICK-TOCK. TICK-TOCK. He felt like throwing it down on the rails. What's that—there! Another white post rushed by. Only another mile . . . and it was 5:38. Seven precious minutes were left.

McReady broke the silence. "We got a good chance," he remarked. "Weather's bad and number 2's most likely a little late."

Johnny choked out a reply. "I'm sorry I forgot—"

Mac cut him short. "That's okay, kid. It was my fault."

Suddenly the station appeared out of the gloom on the left. Pete slowed down. McReady's voice, surprisingly enough, was quite calm.

"Jump down and open the switch." Johnny had anticipated the command and was already on the steps. He chanced a peek at his watch—a little past 5:39. He grabbed some fuses, stuck them into his hip pocket, and lit off, running.

Number 702 chuffed into the siding. The work car . . . where was it? After the engine pulled into the hole, Johnny opened the switch for the main; then he raced down the track. Sure enough, the car had rolled down the siding and was stuck in the closed switch. It was 5:41, and almost totally black now. As he sprinted along the track, Johnny saw McReady on the back platform of the caboose, signaling Pete to come ahead. Pete was leaning out the cab, squinting to catch Mac's signal to stop. With a thump the crummy hit the work car, and in an instant Mac was down making the coupling tight.

As he rushed down to help out, Johnny noticed the position of the car. It had rolled over the closed switch and was caught in the points. Luckily it had not got up enough speed to roll completely over the rails and onto the ties. All the crew members were rushing back to help out except Pete, who stayed in the cab.

Johnny came abreast of the switch and pulled out his watch. 5:43. "Want me to flag?" he inquired.

The conductor looked at the jammed wheels and replied, "Maybe you better. Can't say as we can get off in one minute or five—maybe more, maybe less." Hurriedly lighting a fuse, Johnny ran into the deepening gloom. The best he could hope to do was about a quarter of a mile before the special would come. Suddenly, a steam whistle came from the depths of the darkness. Unmistakably, it blew a long, another long, a short, and still another long. It was the Hawkeye Special, tooting for a grade crossing down the line. He glanced over his shoulder when he heard Pete open the throttle to pull the car off the eastbound main, but total darkness had obscured his vision. The stillness was punctuated by another series of sharp blasts, this time much closer. Now he could hear the chuffs of the special's engine. Gasping for air, he stopped, and began waving the flare in the face of the oncoming monster. The headlight of the big 4-8-2 picked him out and cast a long black island behind him in a sea of light. Dimly Johnny perceived the hogger leaning out of the cab window, trying to figure out the cause for this sudden delay. However, as red means stop in any rail's language, the engineer tooted his whistle and shot the air on under the 12 cars. Little brilliant tongues of flame licked out from under the six wheel passenger trucks. The people inside seemed unaware of the reason for this sudden halt.

Tensely Johnny waited for the crash of metal on wood and the hiss of scalding steam . . . It didn't come. The passenger train finally pulled up to a halt, with the engine some ten or twelve carlengths *past* the switch. Pete had pulled the work car off the main—there had been no accident! Hurriedly Johnny returned to the scene. The conductor of the varnish stepped down to where McReady, Pete, Al, and the other members of the local's crew stood triumphantly, grinning.

"What's the trouble?" Johnny heard him exclaim. The conductor was naturally indignant at having to stop such a hotshot passenger for apparently no reason at all.

"Had a mite o' trouble here," explained McReady. "Almost had a cornfield meet." He grinned with relief. "Our new brakeman helped pull us out of it, though."

Johnny stared incredulously at Mac. The local's conductor went on.

"Yep, I forgot to tell him about a bad air hose. If he hadn't

flagged you to give us a little extra time we never woulda pulled the danged thing off the main."

The varnish boss then interrupted the confab. "Well, we've got a schedule to keep—no sense hanging around here." With that, he swung onto the steps of the end coach and raised his hand. Two answering toots came back from the headend, and the passenger blasted off up the grade with but a five-minute delay.

As the tail-lights of the last coach faded into the darkness, Johnny queried, "How close did they come?"

Mac chuckled under his breath. "Close enough," he answered.

"I swear if that old camp car woulda had another coat of paint on the end ladder they would have hit," declared Al.

"Wellllll, it was kinda tight," continued McReady, "but it could have been a lot worse. And as for you, kid," he went on, "you got the makin's of a pretty good rail."

"Thanks," mumbled Johnny. He wished McReady wouldn't make so much out of what he did. "After all, I was the one who forgot to chock that car in the first place."

"No, that was my fault," insisted the conductor. "If anything had happened, you would have been in the clear."

Johnny sighed in relief. "Boy," he grinned, "I think I'm goin' to like this job!"

BRUCE PETSCH, '49

York Comm. H. S., Elmhurst

Eleanor A. Davis, teacher

A Tribute

As we twenty-eight scared freshmen hurried into English I sat down. She gave us a sympathetic smile and told us that she was glad to see us. For the first time in that hectic day we relaxed, because even though we had heard that phrase before, she really seemed to mean it. She began to ask what we wanted to study in the course, and how we would like to do it. We looked at each other in amazement—this class sounded like fun!

It was. As the days went on, we began to look forward to fifth hour more and more. Every student in the class had his share in making plans for study, yet we somehow wanted to work for her, so we gave ourselves harder assignments than she probably would have given us herself. Still, all the work seemed fun in her class. She had a bit of praise for all of her pupils. Regardless of the kind

of work he or she was doing, she always managed to find something that was good enough to merit comment.

Certainly it wasn't her appearance that endeared her to us. She was middle-aged, rather plump; she had nondescript hair and eyes; yet anyone looking at her would note only the cheerful expression she always wore. She had the kind of face that instinctively made you want to twinkle back. We never noticed whether she was very stylishly dressed or not, because it didn't interest us anyway.

But don't think the fifth hour English students managed to put anything over on her! We got away with less in that class than any other. I remember once when she found that I was writing a note because I had finished my assignment and had nothing to do. She gave me a rather questioning look and said, "Shall I get rid of it, or will you?" As I started to walk toward the waste basket she whispered, "By the way, be sure to tear it up. My students write so well that I'm sometimes tempted to read their notes!" I grinned and tore up the note. When I came back to my desk, there was a book by my favorite author to read. I looked up at her and tried to smile my thanks. She winked back.

She could be stern if she needed to, and she was on several occasions. One day she discovered that several students hadn't done their homework and she reprimanded them severely. She had forgotten that they had been playing a band concert the day before and didn't have the assignment. We all left class feeling very miserable. The first thing next fifth hour, she apologized to each student for losing her temper, and asked them to tell her if she ever made another mistake like that. Of course, she didn't.

My freshman English teacher demonstrated better than anyone I have ever known how a teacher should teach—with love and understanding.

MARY ANN RASMUSSEN, '49
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